



Removal of Barriers to Increase Cervical Cancer Screening Among Vietnamese-American Women

Public Health Problem

Vietnamese-American women have the highest incidence of cervical cancer of any ethnic group in the United States: 43 cases per 100,000, which is five times as high as rates among non-Latina whites. In addition, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among Vietnamese-American women. More than 25 percent of Vietnamese-American women living in Santa Clara County, California, reported in 2000 that they had never had a Pap test - a much higher percentage than the 5 percent reported for all women in the United States.

Taking Action

The Vietnamese Community Health Promotion Project organized the Vietnamese REACH for Health Initiative Coalition to prevent cervical cancer among Vietnamese-American women in Santa Clara County. The coalition has held community forums, meetings, and retreats to develop an action plan. Community members identified multiple barriers to Pap testing, including lack of information, concerns resulting from traditional beliefs, and absence of culturally and linguistically appropriate screening services that are affordable. To address these barriers, the coalition developed and launched a community action plan to promote Pap screening by creating change among community leaders, the health care system, Vietnamese-American medical providers, and Vietnamese-American families. The coalition's integrated strategy uses six approaches: 1) Media education campaign. 2) Outreach efforts by lay health workers. 3) Help to patients for navigating through the health care system and a low-cost Vietnamese-language clinic for Pap test screening that is staffed by a female Vietnamese-American physician. 4) Continuing medical education. 5) Mailed reminders. 6) Advocacy to reestablish a breast and cervical cancer control program in the county.

Implications and Impact

Preliminary results from the outreach efforts show that 46.8 percent of Vietnamese-American women who had never had a Pap test had the test after meeting with lay health workers. Overall, in this community, the percentage of Vietnamese-American women receiving Pap tests increased by 15 percent. The "patient navigator" received calls from more than 1,214 Vietnamese-American women seeking information and assistance. As a result, 724 women registered to receive a Pap test. In addition, 50 Vietnamese-American physicians have been educated about cervical cancer screening, diagnosis, and treatment, and 29 physicians have registered 4,187 women in a reminder system. A cancer information Web site established for this program has received more than 1,200 visitors and 10,600 hits per month. Moreover, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program has been reestablished in Santa Clara County with two clinics and three health care providers.

Contact Information

University of California at San Francisco, Division of General Internal Medicine
400 Parnassus Avenue, Suite A405, Box 0320, San Francisco, CA 94143
Phone: (415) 353-4624 www.healthisgold.org
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/exemplary>